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by a majority of one vote. It seems, that a spurious copy of the Resolutions was first circulated in the newspapers, and afterwards printed in the "Prior Documents," Gordon's and Ramsay's histories, and Marshall's Life of Washington. In this copy, the third resolution is altogether omitted; the fifth essentially altered from Mr. Henry's draft; and two others added, which were never adopted by the Assembly, and respecting which there is no evidence that Henry wrote, or had even seen them. These are believed by Mr. Sparks to be the two alluded to by Governor Fauquier. They are far bolder and more decisive than those which were actually passed; and going forth to the world, as they did, by this strange accident, with the erroneous impression, that they were sustained by the authority of the Virginia Assembly, they had an extraordinary influence upon the public mind; an influence which the actual Resolutions, emphatic and earnest as they were, were not calculated to exert.

ART. V. — *The Works of the REV. SYDNEY SMITH.*
Second Edition. In Three Volumes. London: Longmans & Co. 1840. 8vo.

FEW persons on either side of the Atlantic are ignorant of the name of the Rev. Sydney Smith, the wit, the whig, the Edinburgh reviewer, and the holder of Pennsylvania bonds. But if we except his lately published "Letters on American Debts," his name is more familiar than his writings. It is not a matter of surprise, that the brilliant petulance and grotesque severity of the "Letters" did not win him many admirers in the United States. The fact, that they insulted our national pride, and were unjust and sweeping in their censures, was sufficient to prevent their singular merit, as compositions, from being acknowledged. After having withstood all the falsehood and exaggeration of the London press,—a press which, in the sturdy impudence with which it retains its hold upon a lie, excels all others in the world,—we felt irritated, that a "pleasant man had come out against us," with the expectation that we were to be "laid low by a joker of jokes." A more thorough knowledge of Smith's

writings, and a perception of the ingrained peculiarities of his character, would, we think, abate much of the grim asperity with which we received that specimen of his nimble wit and sarcastic rebukes. If we knew the man, we should see, that to return an acrimonious answer would be the most ridiculous of all possible modes of retort. While he has the laugh of all Europe on his side, from London to St. Petersburg, he may safely defy the utmost severity of denunciation, backed by the most labored array of facts. Revenge is to be sought, not in denouncing, but in quoting him. He has written for the last forty years upon the affairs of England, with the same careless disregard of the external proprieties of literature, and the same fearlessness of tone, which he has displayed in his censure of the United States ; but as the offences which called forth invective have been far more numerous and flagrant in his own country than in ours, the brilliancy and bitterness of his satire have never appeared to more advantage, than when confined to home scenes and home institutions. His hostility to us arises from pardonable ignorance and personal prejudice, and therefore his accusations are to be regarded with suspicion ; his hostility to many features of English society and English law sprung from his conscience and personal knowledge, and may be received with confidence. He has always been a strong friend of liberal principles, and an unflinching and merciless enemy to fraud and corruption. There have been, in the present century, many able Englishmen who have made injustice and bigotry appear detestable ; but to Sydney Smith, more than to any other, belongs the merit of making them appear ridiculous. Placemen, pedants, hypocrites, tories, who could doze very placidly beneath threats and curses, fretted and winced at the sharp sting of his wit. He has subjected himself to charges which are most injurious to a clergyman, — impropriety, levity, infidelity ; he has allowed his opinions to stand in the way of his professional advancement, rather than swerve from the principles of his political creed, or forbear shooting out his tongue at hypocrisy and selfishness.

But even if his services to humanity and freedom had not given him the privilege to be a little saucy to republics, the individuality of his character would screen him from the indignation we feel against libellers, whose judgments are less in-

fluenced by eccentric humor. We desire to learn Sydney Smith's opinion on any matter of public interest, not because his temper of mind is such as to give it intrinsic weight, but because we know it will generally be shrewd, honest, independent, peculiar in its conception, and racy in its expression. Almost every thing he has written is so characteristic, that it would be difficult to attribute it to any other man. The marked individual features, and the rare combination of powers, displayed in his works, give them a fascination unconnected with the subject of which he treats, or the general correctness of his views. He sometimes hits the mark in the white, he sometimes misses it altogether; for he by no means confines his pen to themes to which he is calculated to do justice; but whether he hits or misses, he is always sparkling and delightful. The charm of his writings is somewhat similar to that of Montaigne's or Charles Lamb's,—a charm which owes much of its power to that constant intrusion of the writer's individuality, by which we make a companion where we expected to find only a book; and this companion, as soon as we understand him, becomes one of our most valued acquaintances.

The familiarity of Sydney Smith's manner does not consist only in his style; indeed, the terseness and brilliancy of his diction, though not at all artificial in appearance, could not have been attained without labor and solicitude;—but it is the result of the blunt, fearless, severe, yet good-humored, nature of the man. He gives us not only his opinions, but himself; he allows us to see all the nooks and crannies of his heart and understanding. His frankness of expression is a glass, wherein his whole personality is mirrored. He does not observe any of those literary conventionalities which distinguish a writer from his book. His peculiarity in this respect is the more worthy of notice, as it is so rare. He possesses, more than any other author of the present century, the faculty of talking in printed sheets.

The difference between the tone and character of literature and of social life is worthy of more attention than it generally receives. The ignorance of those who are called “book-men” arises, in great part, from a disregard of this distinction. Many of them think they can obtain a knowledge of history and human nature by haunting libraries; and if “standard” histories fairly reflected events and persons,

and standard philosophies gave us man instead of ethics and metaphysics, they would not be in the wrong. But this is not the case. Before books can be rightly interpreted, a knowledge of life and affairs is necessary. A very slight acquaintance with the different ranks and modes of society, a familiarity with two or three politicians who contribute to congressional or parliamentary debates, a little companionship with the world's rulers in literature and government, will soon teach us the difference between actions and the record of actions, between the man and the author. We then, to some extent, see the world, not in its official costume, but in nightgown and slippers. The dignitary whose sonorous sentences caught and charmed the ear, and seemed to lift him above the weaknesses of humanity, becomes simply a man, — perhaps a prattler or a coxcomb. Many a statesman, whose talk is garnished with ribaldry and profanity, and who utters in conversation the grossest personalities against his opponents, no sooner rises to make an oration, than his whole course of speech undergoes a change, and the newspapers inform us of the grandeur of thought which characterized what is justly termed his “effort.” A state document is often one of the rarest of juggles. Who shall say what false notions we obtain of governors from their missives and messages? Who can calculate what a vast amount of deception and quackery is hidden in the jargon of official papers and legislative enactments? The difference between Hume's James the First and Scott's King Jamie, between a newspaper report of a public dinner and that of an eye and ear witness, hardly measures the difference between a dignitary in undress and a dignitary in buckram.

It is not wonderful, then, that our notions of dignity are somewhat shocked in reading an author who is not ashamed to write what he is not ashamed to think, who speaks to the world as he would speak to his immediate friends, who forces his meaning into no conventional moulds, but gives free course to all the natural and healthy impulses of his nature, and is not frightened into feebleness by the desire of “preserving his dignity.” Indeed, in this last word we have the fundamental principle of artificial composition. An author conceives that he must be dignified, even if he is not profound, accurate, or powerful. The pharisees and dolts of society find the term a convenient substitute for every thing

valuable which it assumes to represent. In literature, it is the last refuge of mediocrity, — a stilted elevation, on which tottering debility mumbles barren truisms.

Now, in this world, it is more important that we obtain what is real than what is dignified. Truth, in the homeliest attire, is better than falsehood in formally balanced periods. If we desire to know the condition of England during the last century, it is not enough that we read grave histories and lying laureate odes. Painfully elaborated sentences, affecting to describe battles, sieges, administrations, — nonsensical impersonations of the country under the names of Albion and Britannia, cannot give us the vivid pictures of government and society which we find painted to the life in the novels of Fielding and Smollett. In the latter, we see the vulgarity, the selfishness, the cruelty, the ignorance, the vice, the clashing opinions, the manners or the want of manners, both of men in authority, and men in subjection. The rough, sturdy virtues of the English people, likewise, essentially different from those ascribed to them in orations, are made apparent, amid all the exaggeration and caricature of romance. Dickens's novels are more faithful representations of England at the present day, than can be obtained from parliamentary debates and reports of committees. Dr. Johnson's conversation, it is known, was pointed, vigorous, and racy ; but it has been said, that, when he wrote, he translated his ideas into *Johnsonese*. The feelings, thoughts, and characters of men are apt to pass through a similar process, when forced to take form in written compositions. The distinction made by the old philosophers between their esoteric and exoteric doctrines, their doctrines for the few and their doctrines for the many, is still preserved among politicians and historians. The *élite*, who are in the confidence and company of the latter, receive very different ideas of government and life from what they find written in public documents.

Now, Sydney Smith has no regard whatever for the smooth decencies and accredited proprieties of expression. He seems to have obtained a glance behind the curtain of affairs, — to have seen with how little wisdom and how great hypocrisy the world is governed, and to have been unable to keep the secret. He introduces the world to itself, and enables men to see the Grand Lamas of authority and opinion

before whom they cringe. He is the very opposite of the class of dignified writers we have been considering. He hardly acquiesces in the harmless deceptions of language and manner. He has an inextinguishable contempt for every shape and shade of what is called humbug. He does not seem to think, that an essay for the *Edinburgh Review* should differ at all in tone and style from the talk of a plain, honest, intelligent man at his own fireside. Even those stilted which the simplest writers employ, to distinguish between their conversation and composition, and to give to their opinions a general rather than an individual character, he kicks away from him with the careless spurn of contempt. He never writes without having something to say, and sees no reason why he should not say it just as it is felt and conceived. The external forms of literature, the hollow civilities and ceremonies of legislative assemblies, the insipid formulas of expression which obtain in social life under the name of politeness and gentility, he violates or ridicules without the slightest fear of male or female prudes. He never would call a member of Congress "honorable" by courtesy.

No rules of etiquette bridle his wit or his whims. No fear of being called an egotist or a scoffer, no apprehension of misapprehension, prevents him from indulging the full bent of his peculiarities. If a certain dress or manner has been long considered the distinctive sign of a profession, he delights to make it the mark of his mocking gibes. Though a clergyman himself, he has no veneration for any of the external badges of his class. To him, there is no sanctity attaching to a sermon by virtue of its name and form; but he judges it as he would any other composition. If it be dull, pedantic, or fanatical, if it inculcate tyranny and justify oppression, if it employ the phraseology of religion to cover the practices of fraud, he treats it with no more courtesy than if it were the latest offspring of Grub Street. He sees something more than wigs and surplices. He never takes the outward sign for the thing signified. No writer is less under the vassalage of names. Piety has, in his mind, no absolute connection with priests, morality none with moralists, government none with governors, liberty none with radicals, law none with judges. It is evident, that such a writer must be continually disturbing the associations of his readers.

His independence is to be honored ; for though such distinctions are apparent to reason, it often requires much courage to practise upon them in life, and still more to practise upon them in composition.

This frank sincerity of Sydney Smith gives a freshness, vivacity, and individuality to his compositions, which never fail to please, even when his subjects are unpromising. He is to other essayists what Herodotus is to other historians. We are conducted to no sublime heights of abstraction, we are plunged into no sublime depths of sentiment ; but we jog along a pleasant road, listening to the talk of a pleasant man, and detecting meaning even in his mirth, and wisdom even in his oddities. As soon as he comes to speak of social or political wrong, we find he can smite as well as smile. He neither talks about the inherent rights of man, nor philosophizes about liberty ; indeed, he rather laughs at all that as moonshine ; but he strikes directly at the thing itself, in obedience to the quick impulse of his heart. With a fancy teeming with images to illustrate both his reasoning and his indignation, he is never deluded by it in his speculations on the practical affairs of the world. He writes of men from an observation of their manners and conduct in daily life, and never idealizes their condition. He refuses to abstract his notion of a country from the people who compose it. John Bull, Jonathan, Sawney, and Paddy, are oftener on his lips than England, America, Scotland, and Ireland ; and as for Britannia, Columbia, Caledonia, and Hibernia, they find no place in his vocabulary, except when they can minister to his drollery. Great Britain, with her fleets, and armies, and possessions, on whose dominions the sun never sets,

“ Whose path is o’er the mountain waves,
Whose home is on the deep,”—

is a grand subject for the sublime abstractions of the orator and poet ; but Smith dwells snugly in the concrete. His opinion of the nation is formed from personal observation of the people. He has no notion of flattering gruff John Bull with dainty names. “ Beer and Britannia are inseparable ideas in the mind of every Englishman,” he tells us ; and in telling us that, he breaks the charm.

In the various articles on America, contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*, the only points on which he lashes us are slavery and national vanity, — one awaking his indigna-

tion, the other his ridicule. But in the very paper in which he asks, "Who reads an American book?" he gives that exquisitely humorous account of English taxation, which is known to every schoolboy. Here is a specimen of his manner of speaking of foreign countries, in which it will be seen he does not spare his own. "One of the great advantages of the American government is its cheapness. The American king has about £ 5,000 *per annum*, the vice-king, £ 1,000. They hire their Lord Liverpool at about a thousand *per annum*, and their Lord Sidmouth (a good bargain) at about the same sum. Their Mr. Crokers are inexpressibly reasonable, — somewhere about the price of an English door-keeper, or bearer of the mace. Life, however, seems to go on very well, in spite of these small salaries." His praise of America is most hearty, when he answers some libels of Tory tourists, interested in the abuse of republicanism ; but it is always tinged with his peculiar habit of mind, and it is always Jonathan that he praises, not Columbia. All dignity derived from titles, high station, or the customs of speech, every thing, in short, which is "gilded seeming" and not plain reality, is reduced to common sense by a similar process of caricature. His works, on this account, are more radical in spirit and tendency than any others, for they strike at all cant whatever, whether it be the cant of monarchy or the cant of democracy. He takes away all the screens which give a factitious dignity and elevation to governments and men. We do not seem to read his writings, — we listen to them. We obtain the impression, that a shrewd, honest, independent man, full of talent and information, and careless of all external propriety, is talking to us with a delightful mixture of sense, wit, eccentricity, and feeling. A speech from the throne, a president's message, or a report of a society established to overthrow or promote any thing, from the pen of Sydney Smith, would be the strangest, and yet the most natural, document that has been "published by authority" during the last ten centuries.

Few men could write with this disregard of common forms, and this perfect expression of individual peculiarities, without falling into coarseness or buffoonery. The familiar writer is apt to be his own satirist. Out of his own mouth is he judged. The peculiarities of his character must be good, and so combined as to produce a pleasing effect, or his sincerity is liable to be his greatest enemy. A man who

casts from him all conventional drapery, and exhibits his whole nature without reserve, should be, it would seem, the greatest of saints or the greatest of egotists, to pass through the ordeal without loss of reputation or of self-complacency. Sydney Smith is neither, and yet he has avoided the rocks on which familiarity usually splits. Some of the writers in Fraser's and Blackwood's Magazines often fell into a grave error, in discarding the stilts of style. They aimed to give a racy, conversational tone to their compositions,—to write as they would talk ; and it must be admitted, that they obtained their object. For many years, they poured forth a mingled tide of wit, vulgarity, malice, learning, intolerance, and folly, which, when we consider that no man is bound to criminate himself, must have been done in the very simplicity and ignorance of malevolence. In almost every instance, in which they basely or petulantly condemned an author, they were writing the bitterest of all condemnations on themselves. Papers steeped in misrepresentation and injustice, illustrating all the varieties of bad temper, rich in language drawn from the pot-house and the fish-market, and teeming with personalities of the grossest and most unjustifiable kind,—which have been the ideal models of every profligate newspaper hack in our own country,—were, no doubt, considered by their writers as fine specimens of familiar composition. Such familiarity we can obtain without resorting to books or bad company. But these men were masters of another style of thought and expression, essentially different from that we have indicated,—a style full of all saintly forms, and profuse in images of kindliness, piety, and gentle feeling. A comparison of the “*Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*” with the most shameful vulgarities of the “*Noctes*” will give the best idea that can be obtained of the nature of this difference.

The writings of Sydney Smith are free from all vulgarities of the kind we have noted, because he is in reality an honest, true-hearted man. He can afford to be familiar. He is not all Billingsgate on one side of his mind, and all Arcadia on the other. The great peculiarity of his works, apart from the qualities of character they display, is their singular blending of the beautiful with the ludicrous ; and this is the source of his refinement. He is keen and personal, almost fierce and merciless, in his attacks on public abuses ; he has no check on his humor from authority or

conventional forms ; and yet he very rarely violates good taste. There is much good nature in him, in spite of his severity. His quick perception of what is laughable modifies his sensibility to what is detestable. He cannot be grave for ten minutes, though on the gravest of subjects. His indignation and invective are almost ever followed by some jesting allusion or grotesque conceit. He draws down upon the object of his censure both scorn and laughter ; and makes even abuse palatable by clothing it in phrases or images which charm by their beauty or wit. When he writes on government and laws, he seems to detect deformity and deceit by an inner sense of harmony and proportion. He cannot lash the most criminal violations of humanity and rectitude, he cannot cut and thrust at the most monstrous pretensions of power, without considering the enormity a folly to be jeered at, as well as a crime to be denounced. So is it with his benevolent and religious feelings. His philanthropy expresses itself as often in jokes, in sly touches of humor, in broad gushings of fun and caricature, as in pathos and expressions of sympathy. And yet, the sentiment of beauty, amid all the humor, denunciation, and extravagance, is constantly preserved, and prevents him from falling into buffoonery or harsh vituperation. It would be difficult to point out the source of his power of fascination in this respect ; but it strikes us, on the first reading, as being different from any thing else we have ever seen.

The collection of Sydney Smith's works which is now before us is principally made up of papers contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*, of which he was one of the founders, and the first editor. This celebrated journal, the great enemy of the garreteers, was projected in a garret. Few literary enterprises have had a more humble commencement. Smith says in his preface, that Jeffrey, Murray, and himself, " one day, happened to meet in the eighth or ninth story or flat in Buccleugh Place, the elevated residence of the then Mr. Jeffrey. I proposed, that we should set up a Review ; this was acceded to with acclamation. I was appointed editor, and remained long enough in Edinburgh to edit the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*. The motto I proposed for the Review was,

" Tenui musam meditamur avenâ " :

" We cultivate literature upon a little oatmeal."

But this was too near the truth to be admitted, and so we took our present grave motto from *Publius Syrus*, of whom none of us had, I am sure, ever read a single line."

His contributions to the *Review* are scattered over its pages from 1802 to 1828. They are on a variety of topics, — Ireland, Catholic Claims, the Church, Sermons, Bishops, Prisons, Botany Bay, Poor Laws, Education, Missions, Methodists, Game Laws, Travels, America, and Miscellaneous Literature. All these subjects he has treated in his own way, from his own point of view, and each is illustrative of his character. Every thing he touches he makes agreeable. No one should skip any articles from a fear of the dulness suggested by the name. Politics and political economy are the themes which he discusses perhaps with the most ability, the most severity, and the most brilliancy. We would call particular attention to the short reviews published in the earlier numbers of the *Edinburgh*, particularly to those on political sermons. The sharp, terse diction, the lively temperament, the quick perception, the brisk, tingling wit, the rich humor, at times so demure and sly, and at others so broad and unreined, — these qualities strike us as much in the productions of Smith's youth, as in those of his maturity and old age. The charge of infidelity brought against the *Review*, for which Lord Jeffrey was made responsible, was owing, probably, more to Smith's ridicule of clerical fanaticisms, fopperies, affectations, and servilities, than to any other cause. Though a clergyman of the established church, no man was less hampered by a veneration for its ministers. During the period in which he wrote, preferment depended so much more on politics than piety, and the church was disgraced by so many clergymen willing to barter their souls for bishoprics, that we think his conduct was not only free from the charge of infidelity, but that it was justified by the circumstances. A curate, or a bishop, who lends his name to the defence of abuses, corruption, and intolerance, of all those errors and crimes which Christianity abhors, and does this from selfish considerations, to please a dominant power in the state, is worthy of the lash both of satire and invective ; and if the punishment be inflicted by a member of the same church which is disgraced by the culprit, there is a clear gain to its honor. Such a course takes from infidels their strongest practical argument, — the only

argument that has any effect upon large bodies of people. Every triumph of irreligion has been gained by dexterously confounding the priests of the gospel with the doctrines and precepts of the gospel ; and when the former have been false to their faith, the requisitions of their faith have been weapons with which scoffers have attacked both church and clergy. Though the articles to which we have referred may displease many worthy men, we can find nothing, either in them, or in other portions of these volumes, to justify the foolish and malignant charge of infidelity, originally brought by placemen and political jobbers whose knavery he had exposed, and afterwards repeated by better men, who were ignorant of what they stigmatized.

The following extract shows with what shrewdness, honesty, courage, and independence he wrote about doctors of divinity and the affairs of the church. He says, (in 1802,) that the great object of modern sermons is to hazard nothing ; their characteristic is decent debility.

“Pulpit discourses have insensibly dwindled from speaking to reading ; a practice of itself sufficient to stifle every germ of eloquence. It is only by the fresh feelings of the heart, that mankind can be very powerfully affected. What can be more ludicrous than an orator delivering stale indignation, and fervor of a week old ; turning over whole pages of violent passions, written out in German text ; reading the tropes and apostrophes into which he is hurried by the ardor of his mind ; and so affected by a preconcerted line and page, that he is unable to proceed farther ? The prejudices of the English nation have proceeded a good deal from their hatred to the French ; and because that country is the native soil of elegance, animation, and grace, a certain patriotic solidity and loyal awkwardness have become the characteristics of this ; so that an adventurous preacher is afraid of violating the ancient tranquillity of the pulpit, and the audience are commonly apt to consider the man who tires them less than usual as a trifler or a charlatan.”

In an article on Dr. Rennel, he ridicules some fooleries in the forgotten writings of that clergyman, and puts the reverend gentleman into the class, numerous at that time, of “bad heads bawling for the restoration of exploded errors and past infatuation.” The doctor had called the age, among other terms of reproach, a foppish age ; and Smith asks, if there is not a class of fops as vain and shallow as any of

their fraternity in Bond Street, — “a class of fops not usually designated by that epithet — men clothed in profound black, with large canes, and strange amorphous hats — of big speech and imperative presence — talkers about Plato — great affecters of senility — despisers of women, and all the graces of life — fierce foes to common sense — abusive of the living, and approving no one who has not been dead at least a century.” On being accused of intolerance for some passages in one of his articles, Smith replies, “They complain of intolerance ; a weasel might as well complain of intolerance, when he is throttled for sucking eggs.” In arguing against the horror of some Christians at the thought of indulging even in innocent pleasures, he speaks of them as “always trembling at the idea of being entertained, and thinking no Christian safe who is not dull.”

In his judgments of books, our author is sometimes as pert and insulting as his real good humor will allow. No critic is more felicitous or expeditious in the task of demolishing a dunce. The affectations of authors he detects by intuition, and makes them immeasurably ridiculous. In a happy epithet, or a fine combination of few words, he often does the work of pages. He is ever racy and pointed, if not always correct, in his critical opinions. His mode of reviewing is like that which is practised in the ordinary conversation of gentlemen. A man who gives his opinion of a new publication at a dinner table, or to a friend whom he meets in the street, does not express himself as he would, if he were reviewing the book in a periodical. The “dignity of letters” would be observable in the latter. Smith is the same in print as in speech, — the same man in the Edinburgh Review that he is at his own fireside. This kind of criticism is what poor authors dread. Puffs in the newspapers are no offset to scorn in the markets. Many a scribbler has been destroyed by an after-dinner jest, kindly reported *verbatim* to him by a literary friend, after having been patted into self-complacency by the praise of magazines. An author, before he indulges the pleasing contemplation of being popular, should endeavour to know what is said of his works, as well as what is written of them. Smith's style of reviewing gives him accurate information on the former point, though at a great expense to his self-importance.

With all his levity and trifling, our author is generally just

and fair in criticism. Macaulay exceeds him in the overpowering declamation with which he crushes and grinds to atoms the pretenders in literature and politics ; but his exceeding severity sometimes excites commiseration for the offender ; while Smith generally carries the reader along with him, even to the limits of caricature. When he dissects or cuffs a description of writers whom he includes under the general term of Noodles, he often seems to sink the person in the thing, and to treat of the genus rather than the individual. If we can conceive of a pleasant, jovial, experimental philosopher, pinning a beetle to the table, and deducing from his structure and contortions the general laws to which they may be referred, we may obtain some notion of the treatment which Noodle suffers, when it is his fortune to fall into the hands of Sydney Smith. For any particular person of the class he has no enmity, but thinking that the class itself is pernicious in its follies, bigotries, and absurdities, he torments one of them as a warning to the rest. It was a sad day for Grub Street, when the critical offices of judge, jury, and executioner were all combined in one man of wit, and the sentences of the court expressed in ludicrous images and cutting jests. On the whole, if fools must be whipped, no humane and intelligent person would object to Sydney Smith as the wielder of the rod, — being pretty certain, that the punishment would be inflicted with as much mercy as, under the circumstances, ought to be expected.

The notice of Dr. Parr contains the best criticism on the English of that celebrated linguist we have ever seen. The objection, that he never appears to forget himself, “ or to be hurried by his subject into obvious language,” is applicable to many other men whose trust is not in things but sentences. A foolish alarmist, named Bowles, wrote a furious pamphlet in 1802, which Smith describes as being “ written in the genuine spirit of the Windham and Pitt school ; though Mr. Bowles cannot be called a servile copyist of either of these gentlemen, as he has rejected the logic of the one, and the eloquence of the other, and imitated them only in their headstrong violence and exaggerated abuse.” An abstract of a play by Monk Lewis concludes in this wise : “ Orsino stabs his own son, at the moment the king is in his son’s power ; falls down, from the wounds he has received in battle ; and dies in the usual dramatic style, repeating twenty-two hex-

ameter verses." In a review of a Frenchman's book of travels in England, after making some acute remarks on the mistakes of foreign tourists, Smith adds, "Mr. Jacob Fievée, with the most surprising talents for doing wrong, has contrived to condense and agglomerate every species of absurdity which has hitherto been made known, and even to launch out occasionally into new regions of nonsense, with a boldness which well entitles him to the merit of originality in folly, and discovery in impertinence." The same traveller ends his charges against the English by alleging, that they have great pleasure in contemplating the spectacle of men deprived of their reason. "And we must have the candor to allow," adds the reviewer, "that the hospitality which Mr. Fievée experienced seems to afford some pretext for this assertion." Richard Lovell Edgeworth is happily characterized as possessing "the sentiments of an accomplished gentleman, the information of a scholar, and the vivacity of a first-rate harlequin. He is fuddled with animal spirits, giddy with constitutional joy ; in such a state, he must have written on or burst. A discharge of ink was an evacuation absolutely necessary, to avoid fatal and plethoric congestion." Poor Mrs. Trimmer is informed, in another sharp review, that "she is a lady who flames in the van of Mr. Newbury's shop ; and is, on the whole, dearer to mothers and aunts than any other author who pours the milk of science into the mouths of babes and sucklings."

A Mr. Styles answered Smith's paper on Methodism, in a manner which excited considerable anger and invective in the breast of the reviewer. He imputes an intolerant opinion to the sect of his victim, and adds, that "this reasonable and amiable maxim, repeated in every form of dulness, and varied in every attitude of malignity, is the sum and substance of Mr. Styles's pamphlet." In noting an objection to a former article, based on its use of ridicule rather than argument, Smith proceeds in a strain of wit, which in some degree apologizes for its injustice, to show, that "it is not the practice with destroyers of vermin to allow the little victims a veto upon the weapons used against them. If this were otherwise, we should have one set of vermin banishing small-tooth combs ; another protesting against mouse-traps ; a third prohibiting the finger and thumb ; a fourth exclaiming against the intolerable infamy of using soap and water. It is im-

possible, however, to listen to such pleas. They must all be caught, killed, and cracked, in the manner, and by the instruments, which are found most efficacious to their destruction ; and the more they cry out, the greater plainly is the skill used against them." We believe the impudence of reviewing cannot exceed this.

In a sharp review of a Mr. Rose, who had attempted to bring the correctness of some facts in Fox's history into dispute, Smith exults over a detection of the errors of Rose's own book, in some characteristic sentences. " The species of talent which he pretends to is humble — and he possesses it not. He is a braggadocio of minuteness — a swaggering chronologer ; — a man bristling up with small facts — prurient with dates — wantoning in obsolete evidence — loftily dull, and haughty in his drudgery ; — and yet this is all pretence." In an article on prisons, Smith refers to the labors of Mrs. Fry, and the extravagance of some of the eulogists of her philanthropy. He advises the prison reformers to support all strong assertions with strong documents, and then slides off into the following exquisite stroke of humor. " The English are a calm, reflecting people ; they will give time and money, when they are convinced ; but they love dates, names, and certificates. In the midst of the most heart-rending narratives, Bull requires the day of the month, the year of our Lord, the name of the parish, and the countersign of three or four respectable householders. After these affecting circumstances, he can no longer hold out ; but gives way to the kindness of his nature, — puffs, blubbers, and subscribes."

Smith's perception of moral distinctions is so acute, that he easily exposes the deceptions of style and sentiment. The immorality of a book he detects through the most cunning disguises. Right and wrong are never confounded, never run into each other, as he uses the terms. No man can plead his nobility of soul, his crushed affections, his refined sensibilities, for indulging in misanthropy and licentiousness. His condemnation of such perversities of genius is not, to be sure, always expressed in a serious way ; but whether it be clothed in invective or epigram, the reader is always able to perceive its good sense and correctness. In a review of Madame d'Epinay's letters, he has combined truth and humor, in his statement of the morality of French

society before the Revolution, in a very felicitous manner. "There used to be in Paris, under the ancient *régime*, a few women of brilliant talents, who violated all the common duties of life, and gave very pleasant little suppers. Among these supped and sinned Madame d'Epinau." He objects to the book, that it contains some improper and scandalous passages, which degrade the whole work. "But," he adds, "if all the decencies and delicacies of life were in one scale, and five francs in the other, what French bookseller would feel a single moment of doubt in making his election?" There are booksellers now, who would not have the single moment of doubt, if the five francs were reduced to ninepence. In a review of a wretched translation of Madame de Staël's "*Delphine*," in 1802, Smith indulges in this strain of compliment respecting the book and its author: "This dismal trash, which has nearly dislocated the jaws of every critic among us with gaping, has so alarmed Bonaparte, that he has seized the whole impression, sent Madame de Staël out of Paris, and, for aught we know, sleeps in a nightcap of steel, and dagger-proof blankets. To us it appears rather an attack upon the ten commandments than the government of Bonaparte; and calculated not so much to enforce the rights of the Bourbons, as the benefits of adultery, murder, and a great number of other vices." Further on he remarks, "The morality of all this is the old morality of Farquhar, Vanbrugh, and Congreve,—that every witty man may transgress the seventh commandment, which was never meant for the protection of husbands who labor under the incapacity of making repartees." We believe that this last stroke of wit contains the whole objection to the different schools of literary immorality. Pages would not add to its force or its pungency.

Smith has been a reformer, a sturdy and unflinching one. In his political discourses, he almost always considers a love of place, and not a love of man, as the predominating principle of his opponents. The prominence he gives to venality, as the source and sustenance of toryism, evinces the extremely practical view he is inclined to take of political disputes. If we are to take his statement, we must believe, that in England the most beneficial reforms, the overthrow of institutions the most absurd and pernicious, have been delayed during the last thirty years by extreme corruption

combining with extreme folly. A pamphlet is published in defence of some old abuse ; and Smith answers it by showing the income and rank which its author derives from the legalized system of plundering the public. His praise of Mr. Scarlett rests on the fact, that he has *not* “ carried his soul to the treasury, and said, What will you give me for this ? He has never sold the warm feelings and honorable motives of his youth and manhood for an annual sum of money and an office ; he has never taken a price for public liberty and public happiness ; he has never touched the political Aeldama, and signed the devil’s bond for cursing to-morrow what he has blest to-day.” That is, Mr. Scarlett is not a scoundrel, and is accordingly to be eulogized. Again, according to Smith, the phrase, “ God save the king,” means, with too many loyalists, “ God save my pension and my place, — God give my sisters an allowance out of the privy-purse, — make me clerk of the irons, let me survey the meltings, let me live upon the fruits of other men’s industry, and fatten upon the plunder of the public.” These words are bitter as well as brilliant, and show that Pennsylvania bonds are not the only iniquitous things in creation.

The love of justice, the hatred of cruelty, the lavish scorn and ridicule heaped upon bigotry and fraud, which characterize so many of these essays, are admirably displayed in the articles on Ireland and the Catholics, and in his celebrated “ Peter Plymley’s Letters.” It has been well said, that Ireland should erect a monument to his memory, for his services in her cause. Taking the broad ground, that no man should be subjected to civil incapacities on account of his religious belief, he tries all methods to impress its correctness on the minds of governors. He represents the folly, the danger, the injustice, and the sin, of refusing to the Catholics of Ireland their natural rights ; he goes over the history of the country to show the enormous crimes of the English in its misgovernment ; he declaims in unmeasured terms about the foolishness of suffering a large portion of the empire to be disbanded in sentiment from the other, merely to gratify the fanaticism and ignorance of the old women of the state ; he uses threats, entreaties, sarcasms, the fiercest and most uncompromising denunciation, to make the exclusive policy appear detestable and ridiculous ; and all this, without any regard to the injury it may do at the time to his

own interest, and without any fear of the calumny, hatred, and petty persecution it is calculated to provoke. He lashes the inconsistency of English philanthropy, for its love of the oppressed in other countries, and its love of oppression in its own land.

“How wise,” he exclaims, in 1827, “how wise, and how affecting, and how humane, are our efforts throughout Europe to put an end to the slave trade! Wherever three or four negotiators are gathered together, a British *diplomat* appears among them with some article of kindness and pity for the poor negro. All is mercy and compassion, except when wretched Ireland is concerned. The saint who swoons at the lashes of the Indian slave is the encourager of No-Popery meetings, and the hard, bigoted, domineering tyrant of Ireland.” “The chapter of English fraud,” he says again, “comes next to the chapter of English cruelty, in the history of Ireland, and both are equally disgraceful.” In arguing the question of Catholic emancipation, he lays great stress upon the probability, that the Catholics will rise at some critical period of English affairs, (generally at the critical period in which he is writing,) and either force the government to yield them their rights, or, what is more likely, join themselves to France. Of course, John Bull’s reply to this argument is, that he will do nothing on compulsion, and that no fear of any kind shall force him to yield one jot of his pretensions. Smith laughs at this bravado, and illustrates its consequences in a variety of historical allusions. “There was a period,” he says, “when the slightest concession would have satisfied the Americans; but all the world was in heroics: one set of gentlemen met at the Lamb, and another at the Lion; blood and treasure-men, breathing war, vengeance, and contempt; and in eight years afterwards, an awkward looking gentleman, in plain clothes, walked up to the drawing-room of St. James’s, in the midst of the gentlemen of the Lion and the Lamb, and was introduced as the *ambassador from the United States of America*.” To those politicians who averred, with some timidity of diction, that Ireland was a millstone around the neck of England, he exclaims, — “Ireland a millstone round your neck! why is it not a stone of Ajax in your hand?”

One of the great charms of these volumes is the wit displayed in the manner of stating common things. There is

hardly a page which does not contain some humorous phrase or flash of fancy, in the highest degree felicitous. Many of these remind us of Dickens. The power of giving freshness to a trite remark, of breathing the breath of life into a dead truism, is eminently characteristic of Sydney Smith. Every thing that comes from his mind seems to be original, even when it is old. He touches nothing without modifying its nature or its accredited expression. Many examples might be given of this verbal felicity. He speaks of a great talker, as "a tremendous engine of colloquial oppression." The custom of giving the persons of a novel names suited to their characters, he terms "appellative jocularity." He refers to the habit of talking about the weather, as "the train of meteorological questions and answers which form the staple of English polite conversation."

Nothing can be finer than his description of the disadvantages of tropical climates, arising from animals and insects.

"Every animal has his enemies; the land tortoise has two enemies,—man, and the boa constrictor. Man takes him home and roasts him; and the boa constrictor swallows him whole, shell and all, and consumes him slowly in the interior, *as the Court of Chancery does a great estate.*"

"Insects," he adds, a few sentences after, "are the curse of tropical climates. The *bête rouge* lays the foundation of a tremendous ulcer. In a moment you are covered with ticks. Chigoes bury themselves in your flesh, and hatch a large colony of young chigoes in a few hours. They will not live together, but every chigoe sets up a separate ulcer, and has his own private portion of pus. Flies get entry into your mouth, into your eyes, into your nose; you eat flies, drink flies, and breathe flies. Lizards, cockroaches, and snakes get into the bed; ants eat up the books; scorpions sting you on the foot. Every thing bites, stings, and bruises; every second of your existence, you are wounded by some piece of animal life that nobody has ever seen before, except Swammerdam and Meriam. An insect with eleven legs is swimming in your teacup, a nondescript with nine wings is struggling in the small beer, or a caterpillar with several dozen eggs in his belly is hastening over the bread and butter. All nature is alive, and seems to be gathering all her entomological hosts to eat you up, as you are standing, out of your coat, waistcoat, and breeches. Such are the tropics. All this reconciles us to our dews, fogs, vapors, and drizzle,—to our apothecaries rushing about with gargles and tinctures,—to our old British constitutional coughs, sore throats, and swelled faces."

The delicacy of touch, the circuitous allusion, with which Smith refers to things commonly received as vulgar, is a study for all who wish to master the refinements of expression, and make them serve the purpose of the most grotesque humor. The Scotch Covenanters are referred to, in an argument against intolerance, in the most ludicrous of all heroic lights. After saying that the Percevals of those days were not able, by persecution and bloodshed, to prevent the Scotch, "that metaphysical people, from going to heaven their true way, instead of our true way," he immediately adds :

"With a little oatmeal for food, and a little sulphur for friction, allaying *cutaneous* irritation with the one hand, and holding his Calvinistical creed in the other, Sawney ran away to the flinty hills, sung his psalm out of tune his own way, and listened to his sermon of two hours long, amid the rough and imposing melancholy of the tallest thistles."

In another connection, in arguing in favor of a good reform, he says, with much point and sagacity, "But now persecution is good, because it exists ; every law which originated in ignorance and malice, and gratifies the passions from whence it sprang, we call the wisdom of our ancestors." Mr. Perceval is hit with much pungency by Peter Plymley, who wishes that he had tried the efficacy of a mode of reasoning, used to exclude others from their just rights, "not by his understanding, but by (what are full of better things) his pockets." In the "First Letter to Archdeacon Singleton," he considers an objection to controversies in the bosom of the church, founded on the fear, that, while the prebendaries and bishops were quarrelling among themselves, the democrats would sweep them all away together. "Be it so," answers Smith. "Every body has their favorite death ; some delight in apoplexy, and others prefer marasmus. I would infinitely rather be crushed by democrats, than, under the plea of the public good, be mildly and blandly absorbed by bishops."

With one more extract, which we cannot resist copying, we will leave Smith's felicity of expression to take care of itself. It relates to bores, — a class of persons against whom he has as great a grudge as against the Noodles.

"Who punishes this bore ? What sessions and what assizes

for him? What bill is found against him? Who indicts him? When the judges have gone their vernal and autumnal rounds, — the sheep-stealer disappears, the swindler gets ready for the Bay, the solid parts of the murderer are preserved in anatomical collections. But, after twenty years of crime, the bore is discovered in the same house, in the same attitude, eating the same soup, — unpunished, untried, undissected; no scaffold, no skeleton, no mob of gentlemen and ladies to gape over his last dying speech and confession.”

In the extracts we have made from Sydney Smith's writings, we think the characteristics of his mind and manner are sufficiently indicated, to enable our readers to judge of the man and his works. The fearlessness, the severity, the bluntness, the humor, which they evince, must be acknowledged to be of a rare and peculiar kind. It will be seen, that, to be just to his compositions, we must view them always with reference to his personal character. Many things in his writings cannot be abstractly defended. He is sometimes too flippant, sometimes too dogmatical, sometimes too egotistic, and sometimes writes on subjects of which he knows little or nothing. He is often a little unjust to his adversaries. He does not generally have enough respect for the feelings of others. He has too little hesitation in offending honest prejudices and errors. All these objections, and many more, could be brought against him; but they are objections which would be out of place. In considering such an author, our object should rather be to discover what he is than to indicate what he is not. None of his foibles could be taken from him, without introducing discord into his character. The wonderful consistency of disposition which runs through his works, from the first sentence to the last, and the indissoluble connection of his opinions with his prejudices and virtues, enable all but the tenants of “Noddle-dom” to distinguish between the absolute and the relative truth of his writings, and to enjoy their humor and beauty at the same time that they may often doubt their correctness. To understand him, and to be charitable to him, we should remember, that he abandons the vantage-ground of authorship, and allows his readers to see him without any decorous disguise or show of dignity. In the case of other authors, we are compelled to infer their whole nature, or their real nature, by a tedious process of analysis and logic, built on

some casual expressions in their compositions ; and to wait until they die, before we can verify the correctness of the conclusion by the tone of their private letters. A good portion of criticism is devoted to the task of discovering what an author really is, and of aiming to unfold the bad tendencies of seemingly good opinions. In Sydney Smith's works, we have more than the honesty of private letters, and a carelessness of all appearances, like that of a man conversing at his own fireside.

It has been remarked, that the four most extravagant humorists in modern times, Rabelais, Scarron, Swift, and Sterne, were priests. To this body may be added Sydney Smith ; though we think his nature altogether of a finer quality than that of either of the others, and placed in circumstances better adapted to its development, without outraging decency and morals. When we consider the apparent recklessness of his wit and humor, and the little restraint he places on his whims, it is remarkable that his writings are so pure in their moral tendency, and contain so much genial and kindly feeling.

We cannot close this paper without expressing our regret, that Sydney Smith lost money by his investments in American funds, and that he wrote his "Letters on American Debts." A man of such honesty, a man who has been so delightful a companion to thousands who have never seen his face, must find ready sympathy in any pecuniary loss that he may suffer, especially when the loss is a reduction from the gains of literary compositions full of genial humor and inimitable wit. A man, likewise, who has established a character for shrewdness, and who has rarely fallen in with the fooleries consequent upon excited feeling, should have the condolence of all his friends, when he blunders in management, and rushes into mere "Noodleism," impelled by the fanaticism of the purse. The conduct of Smith and others, in regard to American debts, resembles strongly the conduct of England before the American war, as it has been so felicitously described by Peter Plymley.

As soon as the intelligence arrived of the defalcation of a few States, "all the world went into heroics" again. Gentlemen met at the Board of Brokers, and grew furious on their wrongs. Persons, famous for making subtle distinctions, expressed their incompetency to see the difference between the

debts of the State of New York and the State of Illinois. Editors, both of Tory and Radical politics, were directed to be equally indiscriminating, and to scatter the whole wealth of their vocabulary of slander on America. The most atrocious misrepresentations, the hardest falsehoods, the silliest libels, were affirmed with the utmost confidence, and believed with the utmost credulity. There was to be a crusade against our manners, our society, our institutions, our literature, and our people. Persons who were taxed to pay the debt of their own State, taxed to pay the debt of the general government, taxed to pay the debt of their own city, were to be outlawed as robbers and defaulters, because they were not taxed to pay the debts of other States, for whose obligations they were no more responsible than for those of the government of Great Britain. The very holders of American stocks seemed to contribute their efforts to dishonor them. The bankers would not touch the United States six *per cent.* loan at par ; and every means were tried to depress the securities of the solvent States. But by and by, our rates of interest fell from six to five, to four and a half, to three and a half *per cent.* Money was abundant in almost every portion of the Union. Stocks rose fifteen or twenty *per cent.* While curses against our insolvency were ringing on the London Exchange, while holders of State bonds were decrying their own interest, many astute American brokers bought the worthless obligations at a large discount, and sold them to our own capitalists for permanent investment. Many millions of the United States loan, which would not sell at par in London, were sold, some months after, to our own capitalists, at rates of premium steadily advancing from five to fifteen *per cent.* The stocks in London which "dragged" at eighty-seven, soon rose here to one hundred and four, and one hundred and eight. And all this was owing to the fact, that in England it was very difficult to discriminate between States who paid the interest on their bonds, and States who paid it not ; while, in this country, it was the simplest matter in the world, to any man of common understanding.

Now, our regret is, that a man like Sydney Smith should have chimed in with this popular clamor, and joined a set of persons whom he has all his life stigmatized as "Noodles." Old Mr. Weller's astonishment, when he heard that his acute

son Samuel had been deceived by the weeping rogue in green, was not comparable to ours, when we read the "Letters." From that production we should derive the idea, that all the rascality and folly of the world were included in the United States, — that Mr. Perceval and Mr. Canning had never governed Great Britain, — that Peter Plymley had written no letters, — that there was no country called Ireland, — and that no English politicians had been in the habit of "touching the political Aceldama, and signing the devil's bond for cursing to-morrow what they have blest to-day." We are sorry, we repeat, that Sydney Smith's weakness should have led him to publish so rash a pamphlet; and we are grieved, that, in a moment of petulance, he sold his bonds at a loss. A little patience, and he might have made, to say the least, a better bargain. The peculiar description of American debt, which was held by him, has risen much of late, and we trust that it will soon be good for its nominal value. However, if he should chance to doubt his "Tunis three per cents," and desire to make a durable investment in securities of undoubted worth, and yet not wish to make another trial of Pennsylvania, we can conscientiously advise him to purchase, among other very valuable and unblemished American stocks, those which go under the name of Massachusetts Fives and New York Sixes.

ART. VI. — *A Selection from the Writings of Henry R. Cleveland. With a Memoir by* GEORGE S. HILLARD. Printed for Private Distribution. 1844. pp. li. & 384. 16mo.

THOUGH this beautiful volume is not printed for general circulation, we shall not violate any private confidence by giving some account of its contents in these pages. Mr. Cleveland was an occasional contributor to our Journal, and his papers were always welcomed by readers of taste; this circumstance gives us, in some degree, a right to avail ourselves of the present opportunity to record, in a periodical which his writings adorned, our impressions of his life and literary character.